DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 446 CS 508 718

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TITLE Relationship of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement with Advertising Interactions and Beliefs among Malaysian Students.
PUB DATE Aug 94
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (77th, Atlanta, GA, August 10-13, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Advertising; Audience Analysis; Consumer Economics; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Student Attitudes; *Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS *Malaysia

ABSTRACT

A study examined Malaysian students' involvement with purchasing, with branded products, and with themselves as well as their responses to and beliefs about advertising, by ethnic group. Subjects, 387 students at a university in Penang, Malaysia, completed questionnaires measuring their responses to advertising. Results indicated a relatively high purchasing involvement, average brand involvement, and a somewhat individualistic orientation to purchasing, as well as average interactions (attention to, influences of, etc.) with advertising, and average to negative beliefs about social and economic aspects of advertising. Results also indicated that purchasing involvement was negatively related to social beliefs about advertising, and brand involvement was related to the functional value and influence of advertising on purchase. Explanations for many of the findings are the stage of development of Malaysia as a consumer society and the strong government and consumer association efforts to regulate advertising and educate consumers about it. (Contains 63 references, three notes, and four tables of data.) (RS)

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Relationship of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement with Advertising Interactions and Beliefs Among Malaysian Students

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Paper accepted for presentation to the Advertising Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the National Convention, Atlanta, GA, August 1994. The author acknowledges the help of Dr. Meera Komarraju, Visiting Faculty, and Mohamad Md. Yusoff, Faculty, University of Science, Penang, Malaysia, in data collection, and the help of the Center for International Business Education and Research, College of Business Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, in funding.

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Abstract

This study finds relatively high purchasing involvement, average brand involvement, and a somewhat individualistic orientation to purchasing, as well as average interactions (attention to, influence of, etc.) with advertising and average to negative beliefs about social and economic aspects of advertising among Malaysian students. It also finds that purchasing involvement is negatively related to social beliefs about advertising, and brand involvement is related to the functional value and influence of advertising on purchase. That is, the more highly involved purchasers have more unfavorable views about advertising's social impact, and the more brand conscious respondents find advertising useful and believe it influences their purchasing behavior.

The stage of development of Malaysia as a consumer society and the strong government and consumer association efforts to regulate advertising and educate consumers about it respectively are offered as explanations for many of the findings.

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Relationship of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement with Advertising Interactions and Beliefs Among Malaysian Students

The attention marketing researchers have focused on the construct of involvement is historically long, conceptually wide, and operationally diverse. Advertising interactions, particularly cognitive, affective, and conative responses to specific advertising, have also received considerable scrutiny. While advertising beliefs have not been quite the same "blue-eyed boy" of marketing researchers, they have received a fair share of attention. This study is positioned at the crossroads where these strands of research meet. It assesses the relationship between involvement and interactions with and beliefs about advertising. Given the importance of international study in advertising, the study is set in Malaysia.

Involvement

In the marketing/advertising literature, the construct of involvement occupies a central place. Its multidimensional nature is evident in the many referents it has: advertising message and execution (Krugman 1966-67; Lutz 1985), brand (Cushing and Douglas-Tate 1985), product (Bowen and Chaffee 1974; Vaughn 1980), and purchase (Zaichkowsky 1985), to name a few. Though it is an issue of some debate, involvement is sometimes conceptualized to reside in the referent (object) itself. For example, some products may be more involving than others simply because they are more expensive or a higher risk is associated with making a poor choice for these products. More often, however, involvement is seen as a link or tie between a person and an object, i.e., involvement is not an intrinsic feature of an object rather it is a condition of an individual with reference to the object. For example, an ad is not more or less

involving in itself, rather it is an individual who is more or less involved with the ad.

If the presence or absence of this link in a person with regard to any one of the objects is enduring in nature, the type of involvement might best be described, borrowing Muehling, Laczniak, and Andrews' (1993) terminology, as a trait, i.e., a characteristic of an individual. If the link, however, is temporarily activated, the involvement might best be defined as a state, i.e., a condition an individual is in for a limited period of time.

This (trait and state) involvement or lack thereof is likely to affect a person's reactions towards the object or towards related objects. For example, if a person is highly involved with an ad, it is likely to affect the way he/she responds to the ad. If a person is highly involved with purchasing, this is also likely to affect the way he/she responds to advertising. These responses or processing states of individuals have often been used as a third (apart from trait and state) way to define involvement (Batra and Ray 1983; Greenwald and Leavitt 1985); they are however more precisely consequences of involvement rather than involvement per se (Andrews, Durvasula, and Akhter 1990).

Interactions with Advertising

Consumers' responses to advertising are generally considered to follow a certain hierarchy of steps starting with cognitions, going to affection, and ending with behavior. Formalized by Colley (1961) and Lavidge and Steiner (1961), the hierarchy has undergone expansion and modification and has been revised from the linear to the cybernetic and from one fixed combination to a few flexible combinations of the three basic steps (Krugman 1966-67; Zajonc and Markus 1982-83).

A vast amount of theoretical as well as empirical literature is available on the hierarchy or parts thereof. An area of research within this body of work has the theoretical literature proposing and the empirical literature testing the effects of certain variables, either singly or in combination with others, on consumer responses, as defined in the hierarchy, to advertising messages. One such variable is involvement; it has played a central role in models which have advanced the understanding of people's responses to advertising (Petty and Cacioppo 1985; MacKenzie and Lutz 1989).

In Petty and Cacioppo's (1985) Elaboration Likelihood Model, the more involved the respondent is, the more likely he/she will follow the central route to persuasion with a resulting attitude change which is more enduring in nature than if the respondent had followed the peripheral route as a result of being less involved. MacKenzie and Lutz' (1989) attitude toward the ad model posits that except under low ad message and execution involvement where peripheral antecedents become important, attitude toward the ad is more likely to be a function of the central processing of ad execution. In fact, involvement has been a key variable in the explanation not only of specific cognitive, affective and conative responses to advertising, but also of the order of occurrence of the steps within the hierarchy (Krugman 1966-67).

While research has paid considerable attention to the effects of involvement on respondents' cognitive, affective, and conative reactions to ads, to ad messages, to brands advertised in the ads, and so on (Leigh and Menon 1987; Gill, Grossbart, and Laczniak 1988; Muehling and Laczniak 1988; Buchholz and Smith 1991), little attention has been focused on responses to advertising in general. Just as

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consumers may react cognitively, affectively, and conatively to a particular ad because of their involvement either with the ad or a related object, they may also react similarly to advertising in general. Additionally, their involvement may affect their beliefs about advertising.

Advertising Beliefs

Research on beliefs, particularly social and economic, about advertising in the United States and, to some extent, in other countries is common. Bauer and Greyser's (1968) benchmark scholarly study in the United States found that the "public as a whole endorses advertising's basic economic aspects, is critical of its social aspects, and questions the content and tone of advertisements themselves" (p. 110).

The research which followed not only traced attitudes towards advertising over time, but also clarified several issues: social versus economic aspects of advertising (Greyser and Reece 1971; Haller 1974; Larkin 1977; Reid and Soley 1982; Dubinsky and Hensel 1984; Petroshius 1986; Muehling 1987; Triff, Benningfield and Murphy 1987; Andrews 1989; Pollay and Mittal 1993), attitudes towards the institution of advertising versus towards its instruments, e.g., content, practitioners, etc. (Sandage and Leckenby, 1980; Reid and Soley 1982; Triff, Benningfield and Murphy 1987), personalized (projective to self) versus generalized (projective to other people) responses to advertising, attitudes of different population groups (Greyser and Reece 1971; Haller 1974; Larkin 1977; Reid and Soley 1982; Dubinsky and Hensel 1984; Petroshius 1986; Andrews 1989), and measurement of beliefs versus attitudes.

Studies of attitudes towards advertising in other nations, while fewer in number, more or less addressed the same issues: social and economic beliefs (Reader's Digest Association, 1970; Thorelli, Becker and Engledow 1975; Anderson and Engledow 1977; Anderson, Engledow and Becker 1978a and 1978b; Kwan, Ho and Cragin 1983; Ho and Sin 1986; Semenik, Zhou and Moore 1986), advertising as an institution versus its instruments (Andrews, Lysonski and Durvasula 1991), and differences by group (Ryans and Wills 1979; Lysonski and Pollay 1990).

Several of these clarifications/issues are relevant to this study. First, this study examines both economic and social beliefs about advertising. Second, this study looks at advertising as an institution and not in terms of its instruments. Third, the study uses generalized belief statements but personalized interaction statements. And finally, this study is international in character, focusing on Malaysian students.

This Study

The three types of involvement used in this study are purchasing, brand, and self. They are all conceptualized to be enduring involvements. Following Tashchian and Slama (1984), purchasing involvement is defined as a person's personal link with the task of purchasing. Some people approach purchasing with a lot more seriousness and expend a lot of energy and time in the activity to ensure value for their money, others do not. Brand involvement is defined as a person's propensity or lack thereof to buy branded products. The concept is similar to product class involvement and brand commitment which define a person's connectedness with a certain product class and brand respectively (Lastovicka and Gardner 1979; Cushing and Tate 1985). Finally, the concept of self involvement

refers to the connections one makes with oneself as opposed to a group. Simply, it captures how individualistic as opposed to group oriented a person is in making purchase decisions (Ramaprasad and Hasegawa 1992).

The study asks whether these (trait) involvements are related to respondents' reactions to advertising. The reactions refer to respondents' cognitive, affective, and (reported) conative responses to advertising: the attention they pay to advertising, the entertainment and functional value they find in advertising, and the influence they allow it to have on their purchases. This study also assesses the relationship between the trait involvements and respondents' beliefs about advertising. The beliefs refer to the economic and social information (based on fact or opinion) respondents have about advertising (Petty and Cacioppo 1981).

Testing the relationship between beliefs about and responses to advertising and the three involvements is the analytic goal of this paper.

The descriptive goal of this paper is to measure Malaysian students involvement with purchasing, with branded products, and with themselves as well as their responses to and beliefs about advertising, by ethnic group.

Malaysia

Malaysia received its independence from colonial rule in 1957 (Milne and Mauzy 1986). Since then one of its major goals has been to create unity among its three major ethnic groups, the Malay (long time settlers), the Chinese, and the Indians (the latter two, immigrants as workers for tin mines and rubber plantations under British rule). These ethnic groups differ in appearance, language and religion as

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well as in areas of residence and occupation. In fact, Milne and Mauzy (1986) suggest that ethnic divisions are so strong that they preempt class divisions. At the same time, these groups subscribe to some common Malaysian values, such as humility, gentility, modesty, and indirect communication (Omar 1985) which makes Malaysian culture stand apart from Western culture (Frith and Frith 1989a). Also, Eastern cultures are generally considered to be more group than individual oriented (Kindel 1986; Midooka 1990).

The government's attempts to create unity among these groups include a language and cultural policy which accords primacy to one group, the Malay, but keeps a place for the others (Milne and Mauzy 1986). The government's New Economic Policy (NEP) of the early 1970s seems to do likewise. Economically, Malaysia has grown more than most developing countries, but this growth has been imbalanced across ethnic groups. The NEP of the early 1970s attempts to create a Malay (formerly primarily peasants) commercial and industrial community at all levels. Advertising must reflect this NEP: "No particular race should be identified with a particular occupation or activity" (as cited in Burton 1984, p. 27).

The policies which are most relevant to advertising, however, are the national Rukunegara ideology of the early 1970s (includes good behavior and morality) and the "Look East" (to Japan and South Korea) policy of 1982 to counter Western influence and promote values such as loyalty, selflessness, efficiency, thrift, trustworthiness, cleanliness, and discipline (Milne and Mauzy 1986).

Malaysian advertising has had a history of dominance by western transnational agencies (Anderson 1984). More recently though, the Malaysian government has required some restructuring of ownership

(Burton 1984) and has imposed control on advertising content because of its inconsistency with the Rukunegara ideology; "its mindless aping of bourgeois values and styles of the West" (Anderson 1984, p. 219). The Radio Television Malaysia Code of Advertising (first issued on December 27, 1972) specifies that advertising should reflect Malaysian culture and values and have a Malaysian identity (Consumers' Association of Penang 1986). It should also have a secondary message relating to discipline, cleanliness, etc. (Frith 1989b; U.S. Department of Commerce 1990). Such regulations, while irksome and constraining to practitioners (foreign agencies in particular), are inadequate according to the Consumer Association of Penang, a major critic of advertising as a promoter of (Westernized) consumer culture, egotism, individualism, and competition (Consumers' Association of Penang 1986).

Malaysian cultural values along with the presence of a strong consumer association in Penang (where the data were collected) may create an aversion to advertising (particularly given the western influence on their advertising despite government attempts to the contrary). On the other hand, this very western influence combined with the youth of the sample, may create a more positive response to advertising. Also, despite the presence of shared values, the ethnic groups may differ in their responses to advertising. Males and females may differ similarly. Similarly, Malaysian culture, the consumer association, the western influence, the youth of the sample, may all also be factors which affect respondents' purchasing, brand and self involvement, differently across ethnic groups. Hence the descriptive research questions for this study were:

1. What are the levels of purchasing, brand, and self involvement among Malaysian students?

2. What are the personalized interactions with and generalized beliefs about advertising among Malaysian students?

3. Do Malaysian students' purchasing, brand, and self involvement levels differ by ethnic group and gender?

4. Do Malaysian students' advertising interactions and beliefs differ by ethnic group and gender?

The analytic research question for this study was:

5. Do Malaysian students' purchasing, brand, and self involvement explain their individualized interactions with and generalized beliefs about advertising?

Method

The method of study was survey; the design was cross-sectional. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire which was administered (in the tradition of many of the above studies on involvement, responses to ads, and beliefs about advertising) to a sample of students, this time at a Malaysian university in Penang.

The questionnaire, developed in English in the United States, was finalized after several iterations based on pretests. In Malaysia, it was translated into Bahasa Malay (the official national language) and back translated (by a different person) into English. After several other checks for adequacy of translation and cultural appropriateness, it was administered in March 1993 (in Bahasa Malay).

The questionnaire first measured demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnic group, year in college, place of residence, employment status, and income using direct questions. Similar questions measured media use. Next, the questionnaire used sets of personalized (using "I") statements to measure respondents' purchasing, brand, and self involvement. Similar statements measured the attention paid to advertising, the entertainment and functional value of advertising, and its influence on purchase. Two other sets of

statements measured generalized (not using "I") beliefs about advertising, economic and social respectively. All statements[1] were followed by a five-point Likert scale.

The statements measuring respondents' responses to advertising while not unique to this study (see for example, Pollay and Mittal, 1993) were generated by the author specifically for this study. While Tashchian and Slama's (1984) measure was the basis for the concept, this study's measure of purchasing involvement was more specific attempting to place respondents on a cautious-impulsive continuum by measuring the importance they placed on getting value for money spent. [(Taschian and Slama (1984) included a few statements which this study considers to be measures of brand involvement and responses to advertising]. Similarly statements in the operationalization of brand involvement in this study are similar to Cushing and Tate's (1985), but the measure here is very specific in not mixing product and brand involvement and at the same time macro in referring to branded products not brands within a product class. Finally, the measure for self involvement is similar to Ramaprasad and Hasegawa's (1992) group orientation measure for brand choices, the difference being that the one in this study refers to purchasing in general.

The data were screened for implausible answers and out of range values.[2] Data were also screened to see if they met the assumptions of regression. Univariate normality was found for all variables, but the presence of one univariate (for social beliefs) and one multivariate outlier resulted in the removal of two cases. All independent variables had acceptable tolerances indicating lack of multicollinearity. An inspection of residuals scatterplots revealed that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were also met

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by the data. Reliability tests were done for the involvement measures after data screening. Cronbach's alpha was .80 for purchasing involvement, .70 for brand involvement, and .62 for self involvement.

Description of Respondents

A total of 387 useable questionnaires (after the deletion of two outlying cases) was available. The mean age of the respondents was 25 years, the mode was 23. About 22% of the respondents did not indicate their gender (the question was positioned somewhat obscurely[3]), 211 (55%) were female (probably an overrepresentation) and 92 (24%) were male. Altogether, 199 (51%) of the respondents were Malay, 131 (34%) were Chinese, 27 (7%) were Indian, and 9 (2%) belonged to other ethnic groups. The 1990 (latest available) Malaysian population breakdown was 48% Malay, 30% Chinese, 22% Indian, and .5% other (Department of Statistics 1993). Indians were somewhat underrepresented in the sample.

A majority of the respondents (57%) were juniors; 21% were seniors, and about 10% each were freshmen and sophomores. Most of the students either lived in dorms (55%) or in rented accomodations (39%); very few lived with parents (6%). Very few Malaysian students worked: 3% each worked full time and part time and 13% worked only in summer. The mean income of students who worked was US $908 per year; their mean disposable income from this source was $497 per year. The sample's mean disposable income from other sources was $470 per year.

The respondents' media use included a per day average of 1.8 hours for television, 3.9 hours for radio, 1.3 hours for newspapers, and .7 hours for magazines. Mean media use was 7 hours per day.

Demographic and Media Use Differences by Ethnic Group and Gender

The distribution of respondents for demographic and media variables, by gender and ethnic group, is given in Tables 1a and 1b. Since gender had many missing values, for variables other than year in college and age which are presented for descriptive reasons (Table 1a), separate statistical analyses were done for ethnic group and gender (Table 1b).

Malay and Indian students mostly lived in dorms, while Chinese students mostly rented accomodations. Female students rented or stayed with parents more than did male students. Since so few students worked, analysis of employment status by ethnic group was impossible. A larger proportion of males than females worked.

There was a significant difference in income (between Malays and Chinese, with the Malays having a higher income) but not in disposable income from work and other sources by ethnic group. There was no difference in all three incomes by gender.

Differences were not found for newspaper use by ethnic group. The groups, however, did differ in television, radio, magazine and total media use. Malays used more TV and magazines than did the Chinese and more radio than did both the Chinese and Indians. Altogether, Malays used more (total) media than the Chinese. Malays were therefore the largest and the Chinese the smallest users of media. Radio use differed by gender, with females listening more than males.

Involvement, Interactions, and Beliefs

Involvement. Malaysian students were, on the whole, involved with purchasing; means for the different demographic groups hovered just below 4 (Table 2). It is possible that because of the gap in time in the advent of consumer cultures between the East and the West with all

the accompanying differences in recency of disposable incomes, consumer experience, and present versus future orientation, people in eastern cultures tend to consider purchasing more seriously. Tse, Belk and Zhou (1989) suggest that in the move towards consumer cultures, societies go from cautious spending for need based products to relatively carefree spending for want based products.

Also, the Malaysian students were somewhat neutral towards the purchase of branded products; their scores hovered around 3. Given their concern with making sure they get value for their money, Malaysian students probably see buying branded products as somewhat unnecessary. And finally, and somewhat surprisingly, Malaysian students did not lean towards either a group or individualistic orientation in their purchase decisions. Individualism among the youth of a traditionally group oriented society has also been documented for Japan and Malaysian may be moving in the same direction (Ramaprasad and Hasegawa 1992).

In answer to the first research question, Malaysian students were quite involved in purchasing, were somewhat neutral towards buying branded products, and tended to fall just slightly on the individualistic side in their purchasing decisions.

Interactions and Beliefs. Malaysian students paid about average (2.9) attention to advertising, rated advertising as having average entertainment (3.1) and functional (3.0) value, and allowed advertising to have a less than average (2.4) influence on their purchasing. They rated the economic value of advertising as average (3.1) and the social aspects of advertising unfavorably (2.2). On the whole, Malaysian students had average to small interactions with and average to unfavorable beliefs about advertising.

Ordinally, for belief aspects, Malaysian students ranked the social aspects of advertising low(est) and the economic aspects higher(est). Such relative ranking of social and economic aspects of advertising is similar to the findings of many other studies (Bauer and Greyser 1968; Greyser and Reece 1971; Reid and Soley 1982; Dubinsky and Hensel 1984; Petroshius 1986; Muehling 1987). Among the response variables, Malaysian students' ranking of the entertainment aspect was higher(est) and their ranking of the influence aspect was lower. In fact, attention to and entertainment and functional value of advertising were all average, but influence on behavior was considerably smaller. The low reported influence of advertising on behavior is typical; respondents generally tend to report minimal effects of advertising on themselves.

To answer the second research question, Malaysian students paid average attention to advertising, appeared to find it of average entertainment, functional, and economic value, (believed) it did not influence their purchase behavior, and rated its social impact negatively. On balance, Malaysian students' responses to advertising were more on the negative than positive side.

Together the high purchasing involvement, the smaller brand involvement, and the average to negative responses to and beliefs about advertising appear to form a pattern which may be explained by the climate surrounding advertising in Malaysia and particularly Penang. The Malaysian government regulates advertising given its beliefs about the negative impact of (particularly western style) advertising, and the Consumer Association of Penang is strong and very active in its attempts to educate Malaysians about advertising's deceptions and manipulations. Governments believe that consumers need

to be protected against manufacturers and themselves, and use that argument as the rationale for regulation (Boddewyn 1982). Consumer movements believe the same and similarly lobby for regulation. Government restrictions (Andrews, Lysonski and Durvasula 1991) and consumer movements (Zanot 1981) are often regarded as being responsible for shaping thoughts about advertising.

However, even without such governmental and consumer groups' efforts, consumers could have negative attitudes towards advertising because of cultural reasons related to religion and social norms (Burton 1984). Also, consumerism has not yet permeated many eastern societies and its advance is often met with resistance directed particularly at its most visible propagator, advertising.

Differences in Involvement, Interactions, and Beliefs, by Ethnic Group and Gender

Differences in Involvement. Table 2 provides mean involvement, interaction, and belief responses, by ethnic group and gender. Again, separate statistical analyses were done for ethnic group and gender to answer the third research question. Differences did not exist by both ethnic group and gender in purchasing involvement indicating the pervasive nature of this trait and lending strength to the argument that the advertising climate might have something to do with it. Ethnic group also did not make a difference in brand involvement, but gender did; males were more involved with branded products. Meyers-Levy (1989) hypothesized gender differences in information processing with males processing information more heuristically as a result of socialization. Since in this study brand involvement was measured in terms of respondents' propensity to buy branded items over non-branded ones, it is possible (using this hypothesis) to explain the higher male scores by that fact that males may use brands as an easily

available and highly salient cue. However, if this were the case, males should have also emerged as less involved in purchasing in terms of assimilating all cues and making an effortful, comprehensive analysis of these cues. That did not happen. A second possible explanation then for the higher male involvement with brand may be that males are more image conscious than females in Malaysia. Finally, while no differences were found by gender for self involvement, Indians differed from the Malays who were less individualistic.

In answer to the third research question, no uniform differences emerged in the three types of involvement by ethnic group and gender. While ethnic group is a major variable in Malaysian life, it is possible that national characteristics dominate in certain aspects of Malaysian life.

Differences in Interactions and Beliefs. Among the interactions with advertising, the ethnic groups differed in perceived entertainment and functional value of advertising and its influence on behavior with the Chinese finding advertising more entertaining (despite their lowest media use) than did Malays and more functional than did Indians, and both the Chinese and Malays allowing it to influence them more than did Indians. The Indians appeared to be the least "susceptible" to these interactions. The groups did not however differ in their attention to and beliefs on the economic and social aspects of advertising. Except for the anomaly of attention paid to, which is difficult to explain, the interaction variables separate out from the belief variables. The lack of difference in belief variables by ethnic group suggests a societal level phenomenon which cuts across ethnic groups. It appears that the particular ethnicity may inform interactions with advertising but national identity informs beliefs.

By gender, the only difference for interaction variables was in attention paid to advertising, with females paying more attention. It is commonly believed that females do pay more attention to advertising; in fact much advertising is directed towards females given their gatekeeping role in purchasing. The difference for belief variables was in the social impact of advertising with females rating it more negatively than males. Other studies have found similar differences by gender in related variables such as offensiveness and use of sexual appeals in advertising (see for example, Dubinsky and Hensel 1984).

In answer to the fourth research question, beliefs and one advertising response, attention to advertising, are more or less consistent across ethnic groups but, with the exception of economic beliefs, differ by gender, while the three other ad responses differ by ethnic group but are consistent across gender.

Relationship between Involvement and Advertising Interactions and Beliefs

To answer the fifth research question, regressions were run using each of the responses to and beliefs about advertising as a dependent variable and the the three involvements as the independent variables. Interestingly, the attention paid to advertising was not related to any one of the three involvements; given the high purchasing involvement among Malaysian students, this was a surprising result. At the same time, while research which has looked at the effects of involvement on responses to particular ads has generally expected positive responses from highly involved respondents, it has not always found that to be the case (Tashchian and Slama 1984; Leigh and Menon 1987; Muehling and Laczniak 1988; Buchholz and Smith 1991). This might particularly happen with the variables under consideration here,

purchasing involvement and general attention to all advertising, since highly involved people may be rather utilitarian and therefore goal directed (not diffuse) in their attention to advertising. The question of lack of a relationship between attention and brand and self involvement still remains; it would appear that high brand involvement and an individualistic orientation should go with high attention to advertising.

Even harder to explain however is the finding that the entertainment value of advertising was related to self involvement (Table 3a). Those who were group oriented were more apt to find advertising enjoyable. Also, while the lack of a relationship between entertainment value and purchasing involvement appears reasonable, the absence of a relationship between entertainment value and brand involvement is again hard to explain.

Easier to explain is the relationship between the functional value of advertising and brand involvement (those who were involved with branded products were more likely to perceive a function for advertising) since highly brand conscious shoppers are more likely to turn to advertising for brand and availabilty information (Table 3b). This time though the lack of a relationship between functional value and purchasing involvement appears hard to explain.

Finally, influence of advertising on purchase behavior was related to both brand and self involvement (Table 3c). Those involved with brands would be expected to let advertising influence their purchase decision. The relationship with self involvement remains puzzling though since it means that the more group oriented respondents let advertising influence them. Similarly, the lack of a relationship between influence and purchasing involvement is puzzling.

Economic beliefs were not influenced by purchasing, brand or self involvement but social beliefs were negatively related to purchasing involvement (Table 4). Those who were highly involved in purchasing had negative social beliefs about advertising. These consumers, being the careful shoppers they are, probably collect information from a variety of sources. This enables them to spot advertising's sometimes less than objective claims and the temptations it offers.

In answer to the fifth research question, purchasing, brand, and self involvement were only modest predictors of advertising interactions and beliefs.

Conclusion

The strong consumer association of Penang, the Malaysian government's negative view about advertising and its attempts to regulate it, and the lack of "rampant" consumerism as well as cultural constraints rooted in religion and social norms in many eastern cultures may all have a role to play in the generally unfavorable rating of advertising's social impact by Malaysian students.[4] The presence of this belief across ethnic groups provides further support for societal level factors as explanators for the beliefs. These factors may also have affected Malaysian students' rating of advertising's economic impact, which while higher was still average and also present across ethnic groups. While particular national conditions might affect the relative size of these ratings, the consistent finding of lower ratings for social than economic impact, in countries across the world, may be indicative of a large scale perception of advertising as a necessary evil.

With the exception of (the low) reported influence of advertising on purchase, Malaysian students' interactions with advertising were

also average. While societal level factors might keep these interactions at a low to average level, these interactions did differ by ethnic group indicating more micro level influences on them.

Purchasing and brand involvement were like beliefs in that they also appeared to be more of a societal rather than demographic group level phenomenon. The relatively high purchasing involvement and the average brand involvement point to a society that is still on the road towards a consumer culture, not at the destination. At the same time, the fact that these youth were not clearly group oriented indicates possibly that they may be at least halfway on this road towards individualism.

Interestingly, brand involvement and self involvement were better explanators of ad responses than purchasing involvement. Purchasing involvement was not significantly related to any of the ad responses. Its negative relationship with social beliefs might be the clue to an explanation. Those highly involved in purchasing thought poorly of the social effects of advertising in terms of its influence in making people buy things they do not need, making exaggerated claims, and such and that probably moderated their responses to advertising. On the other hand, those who were highly brand conscious found advertising useful and let it influence their purchase decisions. The finding that the group oriented respondents enjoyed advertising and let it influence their purchase remains an enigma.

Limitations and Future Research

The results of this study need to be interpreted keeping in mind that the sample was students. While this is a common sample base in most studies in this field, its lack of generalizability is a limitation. This is also one of the first studies of its kind; its

measures may therefore need improvement. Sharper operational definitions might have enabled clearer distinctions in the results (for example) by ad responses and ad beliefs as being respectively ethnic group and societal level phenonmena.

For an initial study, this study's scope was large, perhaps too large. Future studies could focus on one involvement variable and one level within the hierarchy of effects. Later studies can build on that foundation. This will also help the development of models and even theories about the influence of trait involvements on responses to advertising in general. This study also looked at only one country; comparative studies might be more useful since they would provide a perspective on the responses (numbers), particularly if the comparison is made between eastern and western countries.

Table 1a
Distribution of Respondents by Year in College and Mean Age,
by Ethnic Group and Gender

	Malay		Chinese		Indian	
Yr in College	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Freshman	9(17)*	7(6)	1(5)	8(10)	0	1(8)
Sophomore	6(11)	6(5)	5(26)	6(8)	0	2(15)
Junior	33(61)	86(78)	6(32)	41(53)	5(63)	7(54)
Senior	6(11)	12(11)	7(37)	22(29)	3(38)	3(23)
Total	54(19)	111(39)	19(7)	77(27)	8(3)	13(5)
Mean Age	27 (n=55)	23 (n=112)	27 (n=19)	24 (n=75)	27 (n=8)	24 (n=13)

*%.

Table 1b
Distribution of Respondents by Residence, Employment, Mean Income, and Mean Media Use, by Ethnic Group and Gender Separately

	Ethnic Group			Gender	
Residence[a]	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Male	Female
Dorm	126	50	14	62	103
	(64)[b]	(38)	(54)	(68)	(49)
W/ Parents	5	13	3	9	7
	(3)	(10)	(12)	(10)	(3)
Rent	67	68	9	20	101
	(34)	(52)	(35)	(22)	(48)
Total	198	131	26	91	211
	(56)	(37)	(7)	(30)	(70)

[a]Other=1. [b]%. x^2=24.94, p.=.00 by ethnic group; x^2=20.16, p.=.00 by gender.

Employment					
Full Time	6	0	2	6	2
	(3)	(0)	(8)	(7)	(1)
Part T/Sum	15	35	3	18	20
	(8)	(28)	(12)	(21)	(10)
No	163	92	20	61	179
	(89)	(72)	(80)	(72)	(89)
Total	184	127	25	85	201
	(55)	(38)	(7)	(30)	(70)

x^2=15.65, p.=.00 by gender.

Income[c]	1775	340	702	797	268
	(n=17)	(n=27)	(n=4)	(n=20)	(n=11)

F=4.327, p.=.02 for ethnic group.

Disp Inc[c]	946	157	478	273	128
	(n=17)	(n=27)	(n=4)	(n=20)	(n=11)
Disp Inc[c/d]	421	518	494	507	461
	(n=142)	(n=100)	(n=23)	(n=70)	(n=155)

[c]Mean US$/yr. [d]Othr sources.

Media Use[e]					
Television	1.9	1.5	1.5	1.9	1.7
	(n=197)	(n=131)	(n=27)	(n=92)	(n=208)

F=3.7; p.=.03 for ethnic group.

Radio	5.2	2.3	3.2	3.2	4.4
	(n=179)	(n=131)	(n=26)	(n=90)	(n=192)

F=28.39; p.=.00 for ethnic group; F=6.7, p.=.01 for gender.

Newspaper	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.4	1.2
	(n=193)	(n=128)	(n=26)	(n=91)	(n=205)
Magazines	.8	.5	.7	.7	.7
	(n=194)	(n=131)	(n=26)	n=92)	(n=205)

F=4.1, p.=.02 for ethnic group.

Tot Med Use	8.1	5.1	6.5	6.8	6.9
	(n=159)	(n=126)	(n=25)	(n=87)	(n=173)

F=25.53, p.=.00 for ethnic group.
[e]Mean hrs/day.

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Table 2
Mean[a] Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement, and Mean Personalized Interactions With and Generalized Beliefs About Advertising, by Ethnic Group and Gender Separately

	Ethnic Group			Gender	
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Male	Female
Purc Inv	3.9 (n=199)	3.7 (n=131)	3.9 (n=27)	3.8 (n=92)	3.8 (n=211)
Brand Inv	3.0 (n=197)	2.8 (n=131)	2.8 (n=27)	3.1 (n=92)	2.8 (n=210)
F=7.96, p.=.01 for gender.					
Self Inv	2.9 (n=199)	2.8 (n=131)	2.6 (n=27)	2.8 (n=92)	2.8 (n=211)
F=4.43, p.=.01 for ethnic group.					
Ad Atten	2.9 (n=199)	3.0 (n=131)	2.8 (n=27)	2.8 (n=92)	3.0 (n=211)
F=4.3, p.=.04 for gender.					
Ad Enter	3.0 (n=199)	3.2 (n=131)	2.9 (n=27)	2.9 (n=92)	3.1 (n=211)
F=3.79, p.=.02 for ethnic group.					
Ad Function	3.0 (n=199)	3.1 (n=131)	2.8 (n=27)	3.0 (n=92)	3.0 (n=211)
F=4.8, p.=.00 for ethnic group.					
Ad Influen	2.4 (n=199)	2.4 (n=131)	2.0 (n=27)	2.4 (n=92)	2.3 (n=211)
F=3.9, p.=.02 for ethnic group.					
Econo Bels	3.2 (n=199)	3.1 (n=131)	3.0 (n=27)	3.1 (n=92)	3.1 (n=211)
Soc Bels	2.1 (n=199)	2.2 (n=131)	2.3 (n=27)	2.3 (n=92)	2.1 (n=211)
F=5.17, p.=.02 for gender.					

[a]'Lower' scores indicate smaller purchasing and brand involvement, smaller group (more self) orientation, and less favorable responses for interactions and beliefs.

Table 3a
Standard Multiple Regression of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement on Entertainment Value of Advertising

Variables	Ad Ent	Purch I	Brand I	B	Beta	sr square
Purch Inv	.09			.12	.10	
Brand Inv	.06	.03		.04	.04	
Self Inv	.13	-.09	.15	.18[a]	.14	.02
				Intercept = 2.0		

R square = .03[b]
Adj R square = .02
R = .17[c]

[a]p.=.01; [b]unique variability = .02, shared = .01; [c]p.=.01.

Table 3b
Standard Multiple Regression of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement on Functional Value of Advertising

Variables	Ad Fun	Purch I	Brand I	B	Beta	sr square
Purch Inv	.00			.00	.00	
Brand Inv	.14	.03		.10[a]	.13	.01
Self Inv	.12	-.09	.15	.10	.10	
				Intercept = 2.4		

R square = .03[b]
Adj R square = .02
R = .17[c]

[a]p.=.01; [b]unique variability = .01, shared = .02; [c]p.=.01.

Table 3c
Standard Multiple Regression of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement on Influence of Advertising

Variables	Ad Inf	Purch I	Brand I	B	Beta	sr square
Purch Inv	-.04			-.02	-.02	
Brand Inv	.16	.03		.12[a]	.12	.01
Self Inv	.27	-.09	.15	.32[b]	.25	.06
				Intercept = 1.2		

R square = .09[c]
Adj R square = .08
R = .30[d]

[a]p.=.01; [b]p.=.00; [c]unique variability = .07, shared = .02; [d]p.=.00.

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Table 4
Standard Multiple Regression of Purchasing, Brand, and Self Involvement on Social Beliefs about Advertising

Variables	Soc Belief	Purch I	Brand I	B	Beta	sr square
Purc Inv	-.19			-.21[a]	-.19	.037
Brand Inv	.05	.03		.05	.06	
Self Inv	.02	-.09	.15	-.00	-.00	
				Intercept = 2.9		

R square = .04[b]
Adj R square = .04
R = .20[c]

[a]p.=.00; [b]unique variability = .037; shared = .003; [c]p.=.00;

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1. The statements were:

Ad Attention:	I generally pay attention to advertising messages
	I switch channels/turn pages when ads are present
	I seek out advertising
	I am indifferent to advertising
Ad Enter'ment:	I enjoy attending to advertising messages
	I think ad messages are entertaining
Ad Function:	Ads provide me with information
	I have confidence in advertised products
	Ads help me select the products I buy
Ad Influence:	Ads are a major influence on what I buy
	I often buy advertised products
Economic Effs:	Advertising increases prices of products
	Advertising plays a useful role in marketing
Social Effects:	Ads make people buy things they don't need
	Most ads make exaggerated claims
	Advertising corrupts people's morals
Purchasing In:	I spend time to ensure that I get the best value for my money
	I usually check prices even for small things
	I look into most of the choices I have
	I consciously gather information before making a purchase decision
	I comparison shop
Brand Involve:	For most purchases I make, the brand name is very important to me
	Faced with a choice between brand and non-brand items, I am more likely to buy branded items even if they cost more
	In my purchase decisions, wanting to buy brands is more important than liking the product
Self Involve:	Belonging with a group is important to me in my shopping decisions
	I do not want to stand out as being very different from others in my shopping decisions
	I don't buy products I like if others disagree with my choice
	I am likely to make shopping decisions similar to those made by my friends
	I am rather individualistic in my shopping choices

2. Among other things, this resulted in the deletion of a 21 cases with greater than 15 hours of media use per day for analysis relating to total media use.

3. Since we have no reason to suspect that this non-response was deliberate (ethnic identification, a more sensitive variable, had only 21 missing values), the distribution of the non-respondents for gender

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is likely to be in proportion to the available distribution. Also, ethnicity was of greater interest to this study than gender.

4. Females tend to be more negative in their views about advertising and since females were a large percentage of this sample, they could be a rival explanation for the finding. However, while their comparative proportion was small, their numbers were reasonably large. Also, the means were small enough that even if any skew due to the large female presence is removed, the view about advertising would not be overwhelmingly positive.